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CHALLENGE

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U.S. Rulers Have Long History of :

WEAPONS OF MASS DISTORTION

After two months of occupation in Iraq, the U.S. military still hasn't produced the "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) that supposedly justified Bush's war. This failure has generated a lot of hype in the international media. A major scandal is brewing. The New York Times piously editorializes about the "good word of the United States." (6/8). Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report have all run major pieces on "possible" government falsifications about Iraqi WMD.

Let's assume Bush & Co. lied through their teeth. This is standard operating procedure when the big bosses want to launch an imperialist war. U.S. rulers are particularly adept at it.

In 1964, President Johnson manufactured a North Vietnamese "attack" in the Gulf of Tonkin as a cover for escalating the Vietnam War. Millions of Vietnamese and tens of thousands of U.S. troops died in the process.

In 1984, Reagan concocted a preposterous story about Cuban weapons in Grenada in order to invade that Caribbean island and change its political leadership. The U.S. Navy flattened the island in the interest of "democracy."

In 1989, Bush, Sr. used Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega's involvement in drug smuggling, which Bush had tolerated all along, as an excuse to invade Panama and counter a Japanese bankers' financial take-over while eliminating a political embarrassment and killing thousands of civilians.

In 1991, Bush, Sr. had a U.S. diplomat sucker Saddam Hussein into invading Kuwait, providing the U.S. an excuse to launch Desert Storm I. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians were murdered.

In 1999, Clinton used the Big Lie of "human rights" to turn the former Yugoslavia into rubble. The real reason for that war was to prevent former Serbian president Milosevic from becoming a rival player in the oil pipeline business.

U.S. lies and provocations to justify wars of conquest go all the way back to the sinking of the battleship Maine in Havana Harbor in 1898, which gave U.S. rulers an excuse to grab a chunk of Spain's colonial empire.

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So one could say that Bush, Jr.'s fabrications about Iraqi WMD are just another day at the office. But this scandal doesn't seem to be going away, and the working class has a clear interest in grasping its

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PLP Leads Shut-down of KKK in Illinois

CHICAGO, IL May 31- "PLP in Berwyn! About damn time!" That's what a worker declared after receiving CHALLENGE and a flyer, as hundreds of workers and students showed up to shut down the KKK today. Despite the efforts of politicians, press and religious leaders to pacify workers, many community people responded to the militant leadership of PLP in chants, speeches, and action. Many realized that simply ignoring the Klan is deadly.

Blocks from the rally, a few cop-protected Nazis were beat down while our group chanted, "Death to the Nazis! Power to the Workers!" One comrade at her first anti-Klan action said, "These racists need to be taught a lesson. A beat-down! Now that's a lesson!"

Upon reaching the rally the cops herded the anti-racists into pens like criminals. Cops protect these racists and uphold the capitalist system that divides workers, black against white, and citizen against immigrant to generate maximum profits. Eight anti-racists were arrested, including two PLP members. A few workers gave us their names and numbers.

Fighting these racist scum is good, but not enough. This rally comes while U.S. rulers are struggling for control of oil around the world to maintain global dominance. The war in Iraq, which killed thousands of Iraqi workers, has temporarily secured Exxon/Mobil's oil profits in the Middle East. But it has also intensified the conflict between U.S. bosses and their European rivals.

To wage profit wars abroad the rulers need fascism at home. This means repressive laws, cutbacks in healthcare and education, unemployment, and racist terror against black workers and youth and immigrants. Capitalism needs KKK racism to divide the working class and win workers to fight in oil wars overseas.

Only communist revolution can smash their government, cops and courts and end increased racist terror and imperialist war. Only then can we build a world that serves the international working class. JOIN PLP!✪

EDITORIAL: Long History of Wars and Lies

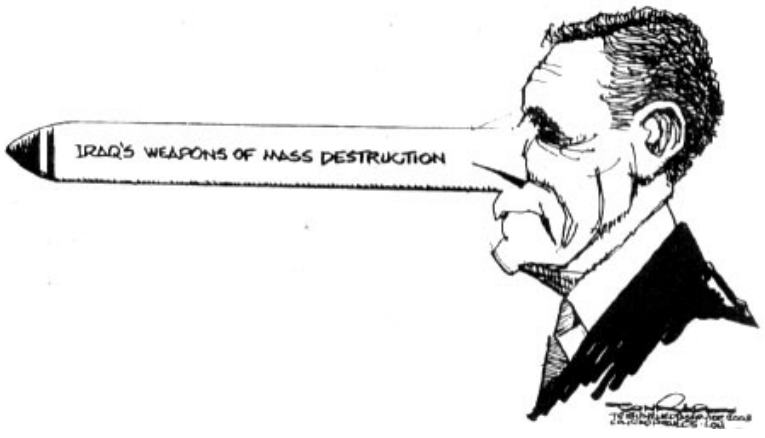
continued from front page

essential meaning. If we don't make the effort to do so, we risk falling into a deadly trap that liberals in the U.S. ruling class are trying to set for us.

The whole point about WMD was to justify the war and motivate the U.S. military and civilian population to accept casualties in the name of a higher good. Well, U.S. casualties were minimal this time. But conquest won't always come so cheap. Already, the U.S. occupiers are taking daily casualties in a conflict that now appears to have turned into a guerrilla war. Iraq, after Afghanistan, represents merely the second stage of a sweeping U.S. plan to rule the world by force. A war against Iran and an occupation of Saudi Arabia aren't out of the question in the not-so-distant future. The U.S. military has now ringed all of former Soviet Central Asia. The bosses are making noise about dealing with North Korea. On the more distant horizon lies a potential direct conflict with some combination of the U.S.'s main imperialist competitors. China, Russia, France and Germany could be in the mix.

CHALLENGE can't predict the exact scenarios or timetables. But Bush's invasion of Iraq must not be considered a one-shot deal. As Stratfor.com (intelligence news service) says, this is "a war that will last for many years." (6/5)

Viewed in this context, the mounting WMD-gate scandal appears as a fight among the big bosses over how best to inspire the working class to fight and die for the strategic goal of maintaining U.S. world domination. Bush's detractors within the ruling class don't give a damn about the moral implications of lying. They do it all the time themselves. However, they worry deeply about motivating workers to line up as enthusiastic cannon-fodder for future wars. One New York Times columnist frets: "...if [WMD] are not found, some...worry about what might happen if Mr. Bush or a successor tried to rally American or international backing for another war — say, with Iran or North Korea — using disputed evidence to buttress the case." (6/8). The Times editorial chimes in: "The issue goes to the heart of American leadership," and agonizes about what might happen to U.S. credibility "when real threats materialize," if a U.S. president "squanders...credibility." Stratfor is a little more direct than the Times: "[Bush's] use of smoke and mirrors to justify a war in which Iraq was simply a single campaign ...created a situation in which the American public had one perception of the reason for the war while the war's planner had another...[T]his is a dangerous situation to have created." (6/5).



Hovering over the big bosses' heads is the fear that "Vietnam Syndrome" — the unwillingness of troops to fight for U.S. imperialism — is alive and well within the U.S. military and society at large. This fear is justified! The rulers would love to whip up a Hitler-like wave of racist patriotism to fuel their drive for world conquest. So far, they haven't done too well. Bush's awkward WMD fictions prove the point. Now the liberals (Kerry, et al.) are floating gimmicks like "national service" to mislead us into marching for their agenda.

Ultimately, the rulers have no choice other than racing from one Big Lie to another. No war they launch can serve the interests of the working class. Communism remains the only goal worth fighting and dying for. As the WMD-gate scandal sharpens and the rulers contrive new schemes to gull us into their bloody wars , CHALLENGE will continue to expose their true imperialist motives. Joining and building the Progressive Labor Party is the only sure path to sharpen the class struggle, leading the working class to a communist future.✪

U.S. Road Map to War Filled With Potholes

Iraq remains so dangerous that its "liberator" George Bush can't even set foot there. Unable to ensure their boss's safety on the ground, Bush's handlers had to settle for a less than triumphal fly-over of Iraq during his recent Mideast trip. After a relatively easy campaign in Iraq and buying off Saddam's top generals, while killing at least 5,000 civilians, U.S. forces now face guerrilla warfare. Ambushing Iraqi holdouts are killing GIs at a rate only slightly lower than in the original invasion.

The situation in Iraq reflects troubles confronting U.S. rulers throughout the Middle East. They need to control its oil by force in order to maintain their superpower dominance over foreign rivals. Washington has a two-fold strategy: ringing the Middle East with staging bases for future invasions, and relying on local regimes to impoverish and terrorize workers. Both schemes are creating increasing instability in the region.

Israel is supposed to guard the western flank of the U.S.'s Mideast oil province and suppress the Palestinian segment of the Arab working class. But, directly due to U.S. action, mounting internal violence is dashing U.S. rulers' hopes for a stable, reliable Israel. U.S threats against Iran after the Iraq invasion only emboldened the Islamic Hamas faction, which gets support from Iran's ayatollahs, who are themselves in league with French and Russian oil bosses. (The Russians are helping Iran build a nuclear plant, defying U.S. protests.) Hamas is boycotting Bush's Israeli-Palestinian "peace" talks and has launched a new series of suicidal attacks on Israelis.

The poverty and misery at the heart of Palestinian workers' current unrest goes back to the U.S.'s first invasion of Iraq. At that time, under Washington's instructions, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia expelled some 600,000 Palestinian workers and cut off financial aid to the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and Jordan. U.S. bosses feared the workers would side with Iraq. Many of these displaced workers returned home to the West Bank and Gaza.

Afghanistan is not proving to be the military stronghold U.S. rulers hoped for. It sits at the Persian Gulf oilfields' eastern edge and contains strategic oil and gas pipeline routes. U.S. forces there have not succeeded in eradicating Al Qaeda-Taleban forces, which killed four German soldiers last week.

The re-emerging threat from Al Qaeda is, in fact, forcing the Pentagon to withdraw troops from Saudi Arabia, the crown jewel of the Mideast oil treasure. Meanwhile, the U.S. military is beefing up its presence in neighboring Bahrain and Qatar. Al Qaeda represents Saudi capitalists who don't belong to the royal family and want to take over the vast Saudi oil industry for themselves. The U.S.-led butchery in Iraq did the opposite of intimidating Al Qaeda, as the latter's recent terror attacks in Morocco and Saudi Arabia show.

The Al Qaeda menace also has U.S. bosses rethinking their long-standing love match with the Saudi royal family. On June 5, Saudi Aramco and Exxon Mobil scrapped a $15 billion natural gas deal that the house of Saud had pushed. One reason was that Exxon wanted a bigger profit share than the royals wanted to give. But, in addition, U.S. rulers no longer seem willing to guarantee the royal family's survival indefinitely.

Given the combination of the U.S. rulers' need to control the Middle East by military intervention along with the repressiveness of local governments there, Stratfor.com, an intelligence news service, (6/6) concludes, "The stage is now set for upheaval and change." This means more imperialist invasions and more popular uprisings.

The working class of the Middle East, led by oil workers, has a long pro-communist history. Unfortunately, the opportunism of the old communist movement has left the field open today to the local fundamentalist and nationalist bosses. It's time to build a new communist movement based on the unity of all workers and their allies against ALL local bosses and the imperialists, with the goal of fighting for a communist Middle East.✪

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

✪PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of capitalism, like wages and divisions of labor.

✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✪Communism means working collectively to build a society based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

✪Communism means abolishing nations which leads to nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers, eventually everyone must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!

PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

CHALLENGE PERIODICALS
PO Box 808
BROOKLYN, NY 11202
www.plp.org
email:
cd188@juno.com
718 630 9440

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Back GE Workers' Fight vs. Health, Job Cuts

LYNN, MA, June 7 — Today nearly 3,000 General Electric workers from Lynn, Cleveland, Louisville and many other Eastern and Mid-Western cities rallied in preparation for a possible strike of 24,000 workers nationwide. They're fighting increasing healthcare costs, attacks on retirees, and plans to move production to countries where workers get $2/hr or less. PLP'ers joined the rally to support the workers and bring them a message of revolution.

We distributed CHALLENGE and several hundred leaflets exposing GE's role as the most profitable weapons manufacturer in the world, which the bosses use in their imperialist slaughters. GE also owns NBC, a key part of the bosses' pro-war propaganda machine.

PLP called on workers to strike GE and damage the bosses' ability to wage unending wars.

PLP called on workers to strike GE and damage the bosses' ability to wage unending wars. In contrast, a Lynn congressman jingoistically proclaimed his support for GE workers because they make weapons (the Lynn plant's specialty). He said the country has recently "gained a great appreciation for our men and women in uniform," and those workers "who make the weapons who keep them safe." We also revealed the role of the IUE hacks in screwing workers for over 50 years (see CHALLENGE, 6/11) and called on workers to reject them.

Most of our leaflets and nearly all our CHALLENGES were taken by the mostly black workers from Cleveland and the integrated group from Louisville. The Cleveland workers supported the 2001 Cincinnati rebellion against a cop murderer and embraced our ideas about fighting racist police terror and the KKK. They were enthusiastic about striking GE. The Louisville workers welcomed our message attacking the police killing of GE striker Michelle Rogers in January. Many agreed that the cops' job is to protect the bosses, their property and their scabs. Many of these workers were her friends. One contact came from that group.

While the hacks said they mourned sister Rogers' death, they said nothing about the role of the police, despite the fact that the Louisville workers face regular harassment from the cops and the Klan, and periodic police raids on their local office. When the rally ended, the hacks "thanked" the police and praised them for being AFL-CIO members. The Louisville workers laughed because they knew better.

Most workers from the mostly white Lynn plant refused our leaflets, some with hostility. Many wore shirts decorated with American flags, equating patriotism with fighting corporate greed. We were attacked for being communists and opposing the war. Many of these workers were unhappy about the idea of a strike, some clinging to the illusion that GE could come around without one.

The positive response from the Cleveland and Louisville workers demonstrates that industrial workers, especially those from plants that are integrated or have a large black workforce, are open to our revolutionary communist message. These workers will be the key force for making revolution. Workers everywhere must back GE workers if they strike, helping build class-consciousness and solidarity. Class contradictions can become clearer during strikes.

During the last national GE strike, during the Vietnam War in 1969, PLP led

Michelle Rogers' daughter at the spot where her mother was killed by the cops.

10,000 workers and students to break away from a pacifist anti-war demonstration to march to the Labor Department in support of the strikers. We organized workers and students to walk the picket lines nation-wide under the banner, "War-maker, Strike-breaker! Smash GE!" and built a red-led worker-student alliance. Workers, soldiers, and students at war-making facilities and institutions can defeat the bosses' war machine.✪

Bosses Say Cut Back; Union Hacks Say 'O.K.'

LOS ANGELES, June 9 — Mass layoffs, cuts in wages, benefits and services, hikes in sales, excise and vehicle taxes — workers are MAD. So what's California union leaders' "answer"? Some mild protests to let off steam but stick with the Democrats, accept some layoffs and "not-so-bad" cuts.

SEIU Local 660 and other public worker unions are mobilizing a June 16-17 protest against these attacks. But there's a twist. The union leaders are proposing a sales tax increase to bail out the bosses from the budget deficit, a racist tax hike falling heaviest on workers, especially on black, Latin and immigrant workers.

Meanwhile, the "rallying cry" of the state's largest union, the California School Employees Association (CSEA) is, "A Fair Share, Not the Whole Share"! They want job and wage-cuts only "in proportion to" their numbers in the workforce and to their salaries. This "bargaining position," starting from acceptance of layoffs, limits workers' ability to fight back.

In 1865, Karl Marx rallied the International Workingman's Association with: "Instead of… 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' they [the working class] ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, Abolition of the wage system!"

The working class is still struggling valiantly for a "fair day's wage for a fair day's work," to obtain more of the value of our labor power. Some workers have wrested some concessions; most live in deepening poverty. Workers have not won the freedom to be gained only from ending the wage system. Since workers produce all value, we should reap the FULL fruits of that work and collectively decide its distribution according to need. That's *real* fairness. That's communism.

SEIU says, "California is facing the worst budget crisis in our lifetimes." Sure, a quarter-century of tax breaks for corporations, using federal funds for wars for oil profits, plus the current recession, threaten tens of thousands of jobs.

California bosses are locked in a bitter dogfight over this crisis. Democrat Governor Gray Davis, elected by the state's largest unions, wants some tax increases and big budget cuts. Republican legislators want even deeper cuts but no tax increases. Either way, workers lose. But many workers are ready to fight back.

We need to strike against the cutbacks; to organize the unorganized and build support among workers and students who use public services, to feel the power of a united working class. A handful of Republicans in Sacramento can shut down the budget process but workers can shut down the state!

However, that's not what union leaders are planning. Instead, they're lining us up behind Davis's Democratic Party.

CSEA's State President, Clyde Rivers, criticized the bashing of Davis, saying 40% of the state budget goes to education and we're "only" taking 4% of the cuts. "The money has to come from somewhere," he says. Not a word about uniting with other workers to fight the bosses' war budget or the huge give-backs to the rich. No attacking the capitalist system that makes profits at the expense of workers' education and health.

Meanwhile, liberal LA Democrat Jackie Goldberg told community college students to contact State representatives, especially Republicans and, "Ask them to vote for tax increases."

These liberal Democrats, who the union honchos cozy up to, like all politicians are lap dogs of the banks and big corporations. When union leaders agree to sales tax hikes and "fair share" deals and "proportionate" cuts, the bosses smell blood and take advantage of the workers' weak position to demand more — while the banks rake in billions in profits from interest.

Trying to save our jobs by saving "our" schools, or "our" companies, or "our" country, only helps the capitalist class that runs these schools, owns these companies and controls their country.

California's budget crisis is part of capitalism's general world crisis. Under pressure from international competition, U.S. bosses are squeezing the working class here both for immediate gains and to pay for the war machine they need to defend their profit empire overseas.

We must win workers to struggle against these attacks and sharply oppose the pro-capitalist union leaders who would mislead us into collaborating in our own exploitation. Out of these struggles we can and must recruit workers to PLP to fight for communism, the only answer to the bosses' crisis.✪

THIS JULY A NEW ISSUE OF:

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SUMMER 2003

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Immigrants, Citizens Must Unite vs. Racist Border Killers

Los Angeles—PLP led several militant demonstrations against the racist, Voices of Citizens Together (VCT).

LOS ANGELES, June 7 — In the past month, another 23 immigrant workers died trying to cross the border from Mexico — 19 inside a trailer abandoned in Texas, three others in a rail car and another murdered by a racist Arizona rancher who said, "I thought it was a wild boar and I shot."

These deaths add to the untold atrocities perpetrated by the rotten racist capitalist system against the international working class. For the bosses' profit system, a workers' life is worthless, whether from Mexico, Central America, Afghanistan or Iraq.

The number of dead and arrested immigrants increases yearly. Both the hated Migra (Immigration Service) and the racist anti-immigrant groups are part of the government's fascist build-up, intensifying attacks against immigrant workers. This opens the door to attacking *all* workers. The terror and racism at the border help the bosses depress immigrant workers' wages still lower, reducing wages for *all* workers combined with mass layoffs and cuts in *all* public services.

Military Technology Oppresses Immigrant Workers

The fascist group "American Border Patrol" led by racist Glen Spencer (former head of "Voices of Citizens Together") in the Arizona area is using remote control airplanes (drones) to patrol the border and detect those trying to cross it. These spy planes, used in Afghanistan and Iraq, are connected with satellites and control points on the ground.

"The help that we get [from Border Patrol officials] is very useful," says Spencer. The government is militarizing the border using racist civilian groups, providing them with the most advanced technology to beat and capture immigrants.

Another anti-immigrant racist, Roger Barnet, brags he's captured more than 10,000 immigrant workers in the last four years, and has forced many to walk long distances as punishment. Many have been beaten. Barnet's been accused of killing immigrant workers who've crossed his path.

The bosses and their government don't want to stop the flow of low-paid immigrants, but do want to terrorize them into accepting, super-exploitation. Many immigrant farm workers, restaurant and garment workers don't even receive minimum wages.

These sharpening racist, fascist attacks can lead to more intense class struggle against the bosses and their capitalist system. Both immigrant and citizen workers are preparing to form groups at work to fight over the long-term, both in union and non-union shops. We'll give these racists what they deserve. Several years ago hundreds of citizen and immigrant workers beat the racist followers of Spencer and Barnett. But ultimately workers must fight to destroy this murderous system, its profits and borders, with communist revolution. Our condolences to the families of these workers who died on the altar of profits. We also offer them our commitment to fight to sweep the filth of capitalism off the face of the earth.✪

ESL Students Force Out Racist Professor

I'm an ESL teacher in NYC. Our class has 24 students, all women. There are six Muslim students, from Yemen, Pakistan and Kosovo. The Yemeni students wear the burka. We've become like family, discovering many things we have in common — our attitudes and values regarding our families and struggles for economic survival. As the war in Iraq unfolded we shared fears, anger and our political outlooks. All opposed the "imperialist war for oil."

Last November, as a professor at the school passed two of the Yemeni students she spat, "I'm so sick of this shit, these terrorist bombers. I'm so angry I could kill them!"

Another teacher and some of her GED students witnessed this attack. When I arrived I was furious. We immediately responded — all of our students wrote letters, insisting the professor be fired.

Another teacher and some of her GED students witnessed this attack. When I arrived I was furious. We immediately responded — all of our students wrote letters, insisting the professor be fired. We demanded that security remove her, saying we wouldn't continue class if she were in the same wing. Later the college "diversity office" interviewed us. As we planned an article in the college paper and to contact the campus Muslim Student Organization to sponsor a teach-in, the teacher abruptly resigned and left the school.

My students, all immigrants, hugged one another, cried and cheered. They all said this could have happened to any of them. I called the families of my Muslim students urging them to support the students, to tell them of our support and to guarantee that none of the students drop out of the class.

Later I told this story at an anti-war conference where the group was planning to combat the fascist Patriot Act and Homeland Security. I told my students about the Conference. Four have become CHALLENGE readers.

The students have selected two stories written by their classmates to present at the end-of-the-year celebration. One was about Ramadan written by a young woman recently arrived from Yemen. The camaraderie and respect, the collective approach to discussing our political and cultural outlooks and the willingness to fight back is a vivid expression of working-class solidarity and internationalism. The classroom truly presents workers, students and Party members with great opportunities. It is the job of Party members to seize these opportunities.

A comrade

Striking Teachers Confront Peru's Army, Union Hacks

LIMA, PERU, June 10 — This past weekend teachers voted to continue their strike, defying their leadership's agreement to a deal with the government of Alejandro Toledo, the former World Bank official. Rank-and-file teachers across the country rejected the sell-out by the Patria Roja (Red Fatherland) fake leftist group which controls the executive board of SUTEP (the teachers' union). The deal offered teachers a monthly increase of 100 soles ($29), the same amount first proposed by the government. The only "gains" were for the union leaders, particularly the one making them part of the government-run National Education Council.

The strike itself was launched only because of rank-and-file pressure. The leadership decided to support a strike only a few days before it began early in May, in order to maintain control. During the strike, only the rank-and-file teachers fought to expand it and make it more militant. The government then ordered a state of emergency and called out the army with its tanks. In the city of Puno, when students supporting the strike confronted the army, one — Edy Qilca — was shot and killed. Later in the area of Comas, near Lima, Mateo Jiménez, a striking teacher, was almost killed when he was shot by the army.

The radicalization of teachers, students and workers forced the CGTP (the National Labor Federation) to call a mass march of over 10,000 workers and youth on June 4, defying the state of emergency. Fearing the growth and militancy

of the movement, and the pressure for a nation-wide general strike, the union hacks and the government made their deal.

This struggle has again demonstrated the universal role of union bureaucrats, whose main job always seems to be to betray workers. Contrary to fake leftists, like those leading the SUTEP, true communists support the best class interests of workers, particularly the most militant ones. Rather than making deals with the bosses, communists attempt to turn these mass strikes into a school for communism: teaching workers the need to fight for a society without any bosses.✪

Black GI's and the Fight vs. Rampant Racism

"American Patriots — The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm," by Gail Buckley catalogues the depths of racism perpetrated on black people by the U.S. ruling class. However, she uses Colin Powell's rise through the ranks as a thread throughout the book to symbolize the "equality" achieved by black soldiers. She lacks a class analysis and dwells on many individual heroes, hardly relating the class content of various imperialist wars. At the same time the book gives a fairly decent treatment of the role played by communists in fighting racism in the military. Communists organized the first integrated combat unit of black and white soldiers in U.S. history commanded by a black officer, in the anti-fascist Spanish Civil War.

This review will deal only with some highlights of some of the wars covered in this 500-page book, including examples of black soldiers' bravery in the face of enormous racism.

THE CIVIL WAR

Initially, this was a "white man's war" to abolish slavery. Black people were barred from the Union Army. Northern General McClellan returned runaway slaves to their Southern masters! In 1861, Lincoln fired General John Fremont when he proclaimed that all slaves in Missouri who took up arms for the North would be freed.

Karl Marx warned in the New York Herald, that the North could not win the Civil War unless it admitted black soldiers. After Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation abolished slavery, 180,000 black soldiers flooded the Union Army and turned the tide in favor of the North. Although always commanded by white officers, these soldiers were among the most heroic in defeating the Confederate Army.

WORLD WAR I

The racist Wilson administration restricted black soldiers to menial tasks. The only ones to serve in combat did so under the command of the French Army. General John Pershing, commander of all U.S. troops in France, distributed "Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops" to the French military: "The black man is regarded…as an inferior being…constantly censured for his want of intelligence…The vices of the Negro are a constant menace to the American…We must not eat with them, must not shake hands or meet with them outside…military service…"

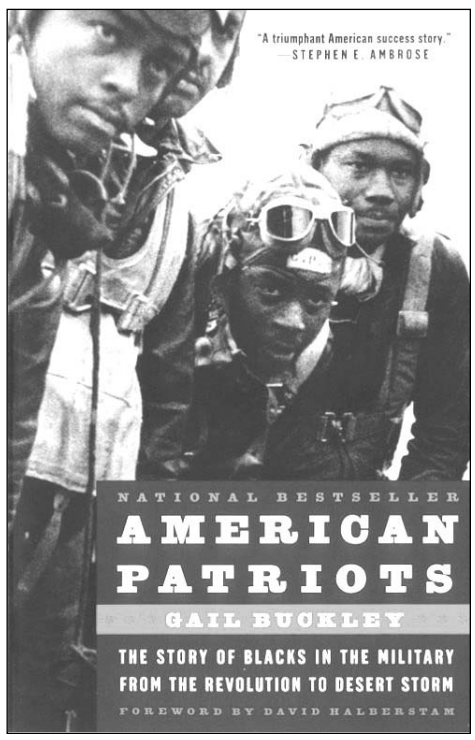
The French burned this racist directive, welcomed black soldiers with open arms and acknowledged them as heroes. These black troops spent more consecutive time at the front lines than any U.S. soldiers. "New York's 369th National Guard regiment [was] the most decorated American unit of the war" but due "to U.S. pressure was denied permission to march in the Paris victory parade."

Meanwhile, 100 black people were lynched in the South during U.S. participation in WWI. When a black soldier in the 24th Infantry was arrested for aiding a black woman being beaten by the Houston police, black soldiers from Camp Logan marched on the police station. In the ensuing battle, five cops and four soldiers were killed. The entire 24th was shipped to Arizona for the largest court-martial in U.S. history. Thirteen soldiers were sentenced to death and forty-one to life imprisonment. Three were executed. Twenty years later those in prison were released.

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936 to 1938

This war did not involve the U.S. Army but it was the first war in which black officers from the U.S. commanded integrated units of black and white soldiers. The Spanish people were fighting the aggression of the fascist Franco army, backed by Hitler and Mussolini. A U.S. government embargo barred aid to the anti-fascist forces, objectively helping the fascists. Communists from many countries volunteered in international brigades to fight Franco. The "out-manned and out-machined" anti-fascist troops were able to last three years due to "the heroism of the Spanish people, Soviet material aid and the International Brigades." This was the first armed struggle against rising fascism in Europe.

It was in the Lincoln Brigade that the integration of U.S. citizen-soldiers took place, led by black communist officers. One hundred black volunteers joined the Lincoln Brigade. Oliver Law, the first black commander of an integrated U.S. unit, was killed in action. Vaughn Love expressed what many felt: "We were all deep revolutionaries. We thought, 'We have to get to the front and kill these fascists!'…I was through with the system. I knew it didn't work and I was thinking in terms of changing society — to change the world."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AMERICAN PATRIOTS
GAIL BUCKLEY
THE STORY OF BLACKS IN THE MILITARY FROM THE REVOLUTION TO DESERT STORM
FOREWORD BY DAVID HALBERSTAM

When the survivors of the Lincoln Brigades offered themselves as a group to the U.S. Army in World War II, they were rejected because they would have been the only integrated unit in the U.S. military.

(Next issue: World War II, the Vietnam War and Gulf War I.)

THE TRUTH BEHIND 'SUPPORT OUR TROOPS'

The government and its mouthpieces in the mass media have drowned us all with the slogan "support our troops" to a point where people say it and believe it but haven't thought about what it really means. Although workers who shout this slogan and wear yellow ribbons would probably deny it, it means: cheer them on as they kill and hope they return safely. Many would probably only admit to wanting a safe return, but that ignores the reality of war.

Soldiers are workers and the product they make is war. Since they're soldiers in a capitalist army and take orders from the ruling class, they make capitalist war. The bombs they drop, the missiles they fire and the bullets they shoot kill millions of people so that some tiny super-rich group of capitalists gain or remain in power. "Support our troops" means support capitalist war.

Those soldiers do not create or start wars, but these wars couldn't happen if they didn't do their jobs. Many young workers enlisted because they were promised health benefits, schooling, and financial security, which seemed a better deal than most jobs available to the average worker. However, like many veterans have discovered — if they survive — they come home to empty promises. Here are some facts little publicized in the mass media:

The Congressional Budget Committee voted to cut $25 billion in veterans' benefits over the next 10 years.

The Bush administration proposed cutting $172 million from impact aid programs which provide school funding for children of military personnel.

The administration ordered the Dept. of Veterans Affairs to stop publicizing health benefits available to veterans.

It is estimated that one of every three homeless men are veterans.

The armed forces finally admitted that their Depleted Uranium (DU) weapons pose "long-term health risks to natives and combat veterans" and that "low doses have been linked to cancer."

Thirty-six percent of Dessert Storm veterans have filed for service-related disabilities, DU being the primary reason.

Gulf War vets have a 500% greater chance of getting Lou Gherig's disease.

The chances of having a baby with birth defects are 300% greater for women veterans and 200% greater for men who parent children.

The U.S. military still uses Depleted Uranium.

'Free Trade' War For South America's Markets

South America is now being pummeled by all the contradictions of world capitalism. On the one hand, workers and their allies are fighting back against their bosses, who are trying to make them pay for the system's economic problems. Recently we've seen mass strikes and rebellions in Bolivia (Feb.) and Peru (May). These struggles oppose the free-market attacks by Bolivia's President Lozada (a multi-millionaire) and Peru's President Toledo (a former World Bank official).

While workers are paying for the bosses' economic crisis, foreign investors are turning increasingly to Latin America, sharpening the rivalry among different imperialists and their local allies.

On June 9, Colin Powell attended a meeting of the Organization of American States in Chile. Several days before, Chile's "socialist" President Lagos officially joined NAFTA. (The Bush administration had delayed Chile's admission because Lagos refused to support the Iraq war.) Powell said that now, after the Iraqi conflict, the U.S. was ready to pay more attention to Latin America.

The Bush administration is fighting for a hemisphere-wide free trade agreement, run by the U.S. But they have serious opposition, led by Brazil's Sao Paulo bourgeoisie, the most powerful capitalist group in Latin America and probably in the so-called developing world. The Sao Paulo bosses fully support Brazil's "socialist" President, Lula. The Brazilian bosses want their own free trade agreement — MERCOSUR — and not a U.S.-run one. They're fighting mad because U.S. rulers talk about free trade but impose heavy restrictions on Brazilian steel, oranges and other exports to the U.S.

Brazil's bosses are supported by a goodly section of Argentina's ruling class. Kichner, who won the Argentine presidency after defeating U.S. ally Menem, is also pushing for MERCOSUR. Argentina's bosses cannot forget that when the December 2001 mass rebellion overthrew free marketeer De la Rúa, and the Argentine economy was in the dumps, the Bush administration told them "tough luck." In defiance of the Bushites, Kirchner invited Fidel Castro to his inauguration, even allowing him to speak at a mass public rally organized by his local supporters. (Fidel did not utter the "R" word — revolution — once.)

These pro-MERCOSUR bosses, including Venezuela's Chavez, are not anti-imperialist. They just want a bigger piece of the pie for themselves. They will deal with whichever rulers give them the best deal at any particular time. Kirchner's new government includes representatives from JP Morgan Chase Bank. Lula has just lost the support of part of his working-class base and of the massive MST (Landless Peasant Movement) because of his imposition of International Monetary Fund austerity measures. Chavez never stopped supplying the U.S. with oil during the Iraq war and is now making a deal with a consortium led by former Republican Presidential candidate Jack Kemp to sell oil to the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Other p0layers in this include Germany, and to a lesser extent China. Germany is putting the finishing touches on a free trade agreement with MERCOSUR. The Sao Paulo bourgeoisie is negotiating with Ludwig Braun, President of Germany's Confederation of Industry and Commerce. In a recent conference in Frankfurt, German bosses and bankers approved the treaty

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LETTERS

"Sometimes our own anti-communism prevents us from increasing CHALLENGE distribution. Our motivation should be that we carry out our class interests. We must be as aggressive as the bosses are when we try to increase our working-class paper."

—A Red Healthcare Worker

'Pushing 70' and Still Anti-Fascist

Please send me the new issue of The Communist. In addition, I would like to renew my subscription. Please accept the remainder of the check as a small donation.

I look forward to each issue of CHALLENGE as a way of "re-connecting" with the cause. You keep tabs on the fascists well!

Incidentally, I am pushing 70 but did march in both D.C. and NYC in Jan-Feb-March. I watched good people in the 1950s fall as casualties of McCarthyism and can never forgive U.S. fascism for that. So keep up your sharp level of writing. Good work.

An Aging Comrade

AIDS Article Got It Wrong

I was very disappointed to see the misleading article, "Bosses Hide Poverty as Cause of Disease and AIDS" (CHALLENGE, 6/11). While the title is true, the article perpetuates the favorite myths of a fringe group of HIV deniers. For instance, questioning the definition of AIDS (implying that most African cases are incorrectly diagnosed) comes straight from two California quacks, Peter Duesberg and David Rasnick, recently popularized by the rock group Foo Fighters. These two are dangerous because they have recently gained the ear of South Africa's Mbeki, whose own AIDS policy of neglect is part of the betrayal of the South African working class described so well in an article in the same issue.

There is overwhelming evidence that AIDS is caused by HIV, in Africa as elsewhere. Block transmission of the virus from mother to child and you prevent the disease; without anti-virals one-fourth of the babies born to infected mothers will die. It is insulting to suggest that African doctors can't tell the difference between AIDS and endemic diseases. One-third of the world is infected with TB, but the majority of cases are latent and do not make people sick. HIV infection reactivates latent TB and the TB bacterium hastens the progress of HIV infection; this is why TB is often the hallmark of AIDS.

I lost a dear friend ten years ago; she was one of the first victims of the African pandemic, infected by a contaminated blood transfusion before the days of HIV testing. All my African friends have lost family, friends, and co-workers to this holocaust. These were not poor people. They were teachers and nurses, comparatively well-fed and previously healthy. Conversely, an African friend whose immune system was already severely damaged by HIV was treated with the new anti-virals and remains healthy today, 15 years after infection.

The article suggests that "life-style factors" determine HIV survival rates. However, many in the U.S. who lived in the fast lane (multiple sex partners, injected drugs) are surviving long-term on the new drug cocktails. Anti-virals aren't a cure, but they stave off death unless the virus evolves resistance.

The ravages of imperialism explain why HIV/AIDS is primarily killing the poor of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In that sense, AIDS *is* a disease of poverty, as are TB, malaria, and cholera, also all caused by infectious agents. But when Mbeki says, "Poverty causes AIDS" he means something deeply cynical. If he admitted the virus as the cause, he would have to do something about it and that something doesn't fit his IMF-tailored bottom line. The ANC (African National Congress) would have to fight for cheap anti-virals and defy big drug companies' (and the U.S. government's) bar against low-cost generics. They would have to push an unpopular prevention campaign. They would have to mobilize to be something they are not — advocates for the working class. Even Mandela has denounced Mbeki's indefensible line on AIDS, amidst growing resistance in South Africa. (New Yorker, 5/19)

Our rulers' solution for infectious disease in the world's South is to invoke "appropriate technologies" for treatment. Paul Farmer quotes an activist's definition of this concept as "shit for the poor." In "Infections and Inequalities," Farmer (who treats AIDS and TB in Haiti) argues that we must reject lower standards of care for the working class of poor countries. That could be a prescription for revolutionary internationalism.

Mid-West Comrade

Look to Workers Not to Democrats

Eleanor and I are becoming friends through our activity in a local peace organization. She's taken a lot of leadership in our group. Recently we rode together to a "progressive" conference. Eleanor was concerned that some of our members have been pushing voter registration as our main focus. "I've been in so many grassroots organizations over the years," she said. "And the same thing always happens. People go off to work for John Anderson, or Gene McCarthy or McGovern. They never return, and then we have to start all over. I don't want that to happen to us." I certainly agreed with that.

"But then what should we be doing?" she asked. I said focus on the domestic costs of the war economy — connect with labor and community groups to push for actions against the cuts, like strikes. As we approached the conference, she said she'd always favored that sort of work.

One of the conference's best speakers was a working-class woman who explored her personal development from an "ordinary housewife" to a community leader. On the way home, I told Eleanor I thought this speaker answered her question. We should be looking to working-class people like her, not to the Democrats, as our hope for the future,.

"But you can't just not vote," she replied. "At least the Democrats are better on the environment, the judiciary, and all."

That sparked a good conversation about "lesser evils" and how shallow the concept of "democracy" is when it's reduced to capitalist elections — and about a book I'd been reading describing how the Chinese communists had organized really popular decision-making in villages they liberated after World War II. She agreed with that more than I thought she would.

I told her some believe the rulers would allow reforms in order to maintain their system. But, I said, the USA-Patriot Act showed they would sooner aim to squash a mass movement through force.

"I'd rather see a revolution," she said.

A Comrade

Revolution A Universal Language

The war in Iraq has helped us fight to make revolution a real alternative for some workers.

I work in the garment industry where exploitation of the working class has no borders. I'm on a new job with mostly Asian workers whose language I don't understand.

It's easy to make friends, but we've had to overcome the obstacles of language and customs. At first I only smiled at my coworkers and they started to call me "the friend," but this was too general and lacked true friendship. I learned some words in their language and exchanged food at lunchtime to get everyone to call me by my name. For me, it was a big victory for building unity among the workers.

When the war in Iraq started, there was a lot of discussion at work between the workers and the boss. I didn't understand their positions and asked one of my friends to explain them. She replied that the workers said the war was for oil, a war of rich against poor, and that the boss had told them if they didn't like it, they should leave this country.

I explained to my friend that the boss won't understand this point because she's defending her interests and has to protect them while seeming to build friendships with the workers (she's also Asian). This gave the green light to discussions about imperialism and class struggle. (It's happening with the help of a translation machine I take to work.)

My friend and co-worker invited me to her house and, using words in three languages, we were able to have a good conversation. She showed me some pictures. In the background of one was a (red?) flag and the portrait of a revolutionary leader. This inspired more confidence in me to deepen our discussion as daughters of proletarian revolution.

Garment Daughter of the Revolution

Bosses Cry Wolf(owitz)

Paul Wolfowitz, the Undersecretary of State, tells all in the Vanity Fair magazine. The Washington authorities had no solid evidence that there were weapons of mass destruction held by dictator Saddam Hussein. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, doctors a document about those same weapons. Donald Rumsfeld puts his foot in his mouth and says the weapons cannot be found. The next day he reverses his statement. The bosses' rags are low-keyed about this.

To some of us this may not be news or a surprise. We remember the Gulf of Tonkin incident. During the sixties, the government manufactured news that a Vietnamese boat had attacked a U.S. Navy ship. Congress gave the military war powers. Later it was proved no such incident occurred. Many Vietnamese were killed.

The bosses' rags lie for the sake of their class interests. In the past we have seen many such lies.

The point is, we have a newspaper that looks after the interests of the working class — CHALLENGE-DESAFIO. We should make an effort to increase the circulation of our newspaper among our friends. Sometimes our own anti-communism prevents us from increasing CHALLENGE distribution. Our motivation should be that we carry out our class interests. We must be as aggressive as the bosses are when we try to increase our working-class paper. Thank you.

A Red Healthcare Worker

U.S. Hiring India's Army to Police Iraq

U.S. War Secretary Rumsfeld made the unusual move of calling on India's Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani at his hotel suite in Washington on June 8 soon after Advani had arrived by train from New York. The Sunday sortie appeared to involve the issue of sending Indian soldiers to Iraq.

It seems the U.S. military has underestimated the number of occupying troops it will need so it's trying to recruit some of the most fascistic elements of the Indian army as mercenaries. U.S. bosses want the units of the Indian army that are actively involved in urban warfare and experienced in dealing with suppressing civilians. This resembles the use of the South Korean army during the Vietnam war. The Indian bosses want a bigger price for this support in the form of a dominant role in Central Asian gas and oil, and firm control over Pakistan.

Advani asked for more time because at issue is command and control and how long the commitment was for and to what purpose. Some of these issues are already being discussed by the Indian military and the US Central Command, according to newspaper reports.

The two men also discussed strategic ties between the two countries including the transfer and supply of military and hi-tech equipment.

It appears the U.S. is not exactly prepared for its task as imperialist conqueror of the Iraqi people.

A West Coast comrade

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More Letters

How I Became A Communist

Before I became a communist I was already anti-U.S. Government. I had seen how they tried to forcefully impose their will on others, and the consequences for those not conforming. Not living in the U.S and not brainwashed by its media made it easier to see such things.

Being from the Caribbean I saw how they tricked countries like Jamaica and Guyana into devaluing their currency via the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, placing these countries forever in debt to the U.S. I saw how they threatened sanctions against St. Lucia and other Caribbean nations just because they preferred to trade with the European Union.

I didn't identify this as imperialism, just a superpower trying to bully smaller countries and take over the world. I was quite content living my capitalistic lifestyle with my capitalistic dreams while deep down loathing the U.S. government. I thought once a president who cared about the workers was elected, things would change. But I didn't realize this would never happen under capitalism. It was only when I moved to the U.S. that I realized how one-sided this supposed democracy really is. The people vote for a president but basically he's still picked by the ruling class. They say this country was built on basic freedoms like free speech, yet when your views differ from the ruling class's you're labeled "unpatriotic" and are blacklisted. I felt the whole system needed to be changed but didn't really know to what.

Then a friend, a PLP member, took me to a meeting at her mentor's house and I learned about communism, capitalism, nationalism and imperialism. Before then the only "isms" I knew were racism and sexism.

As I learned more about communism I found I had some communist ideas for years (such as fighting imperialism) but didn't know it. I understood that capitalism needed poverty, pay cuts, crime and other ills to exist. This disturbed me. Though I thought communism was a good idea, I was still skeptical. I wasn't sure I was really up to the challenge or ready to give up my capitalistic dreams, like owning my own business and gaining power by any means necessary.

Basically I was being a hypocrite. I hated the U.S government but if I got the chance I would do the same. I realized that however much we workers complained about the system, if we didn't unite and fight, the system would never change and that the only way we could smash imperialism was through communist revolution.

One great deciding factor was the May Day celebration in 2002. I never saw so many people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds joining together for a common cause. May Day had been nothing more than another day home from school or work in my homeland, but seeing all these people celebrating really opened my eyes. I decided it was time to change, to become a communist. I've been in PLP for one year now and am still learning new things every day.

A new comrade

China's Red 'Barefoot Docs' Would Have Stopped SARS

A recent article in the Chicago Tribune about SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) by a Lee Feigon says 90% of the workers in Mao's China were covered by medical insurance. Today only 11% are covered.

Then the government had organized a system of "barefoot doctors." They were healthcare workers with some basic skills working in China's most remote rural areas. They not only treated individual patients and administered vaccinations but were also concerned with sanitary conditions in the community and the workplace.

While maybe not discovering new, expensive drugs, they were a network of dedicated healthcare workers, able to spot, report and advise on measures to contain epidemics.

Things are very different today for workers in China. The new capitalists who run the "Communist" Party of China dismantled this healthcare system. The present one is riddled with corruption, bribery and profit-making. China's workers are exploited. One need only go shopping here to see the products made by our fellow wage slaves. It's so bad that these bosses are moving their maquilas (sweatshops) from Mexico to China, where labor is even cheaper.

The SARS epidemic shows what workers can expect from capitalism. The barefoot doctors would have contained, if not prevented, a SARS outbreak.

A red medical worker

Bosses' Free Trade Battle

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with MERCOSUR and asked the Berlin government to sign it as soon as possible. They see MERCOSUR as a way to end the stagnation infecting the German economy. In 2002, Germany's trade with Latin America reached 27.3 billion Euros (22.7 US$). Brazil and Mexico were Germany's biggest trade partners. Deutche Bank wants to set up branches in Argentina and Brazil once the post-World War II restrictions are lifted.

Meanwhile, Europe's Airbus is competing with Boeing for the lucrative sale of new planes to Brazilian airlines. China also wants to increase its trade in cattle, agricultural and other products.

So while the local bosses and the imperialists wheel and deal, battling over markets, cheap labor, trade and resources, workers suffer increasing misery. While workers and their allies are fighting back, they must be wary of any nationalist "saviors" who want to use workers' anger for their own capitalist interests. Early in 2000, a mass uprising by rural workers from Ecuador's Indigenous areas in alliance with some nationalist and anti-U.S. bosses, overthrew the President and briefly seized the government. They all were betrayed by a general who claimed he was on their side and then sold them out to the U.S. embassy and local bosses. Another officer, Lt.-Col. Lucio Gutierrez, also joined the rebellion. Later claiming to be the "people's candidate," he ran for and won the Presidency this year. Now he's a faithful servant of the local bosses, Texaco and the Bush administration. He came to Washington and offered his support for the Iraq war.

There's no shortcut to building a mass revolutionary communist movement to fight all the bosses and their imperialist allies. This is the key task facing all workers and their allies, from Buenos Aires to Sao Paulo to Caracas.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Greed system dooms kids

Instead of the normal cycle of children growing up and burying their parents, in South L.A. the parents, with stunning frequency, are burying their children.

It is estimated that over the past 20 years some 10,000 young people have died in L.A's violence-ridden neighborhoods.

"The young people have more of a chance of dying here in South Central than in a military combat zone" . . .

The mayhem is concentrated in certain sections of the city . . . the most troubled neighborhoods; [with] the chronic demons of poverty and joblessness. ***NYT 6/9/03***

Liberals built for Iraq war

. . . many of the systems that were so successful in the recent Iraq war were put in the pipeline or first purchased under Democratic presidents.

A memo that former Clinton hands are quietly circulating points out that the F-117 stealth fighter and the B-2 bomber programs were developed in the era of former President Jimmy Carter. The Longbow Hellfire missile was tested and procured under Clinton. The Tomahawk Land Attack missile was a Carter-era program that the Clinton administration modernized and expanded.

"The Bush Administration made no significant changes in arms, force structure or personnel before taking to war in the Gulf the Army a Democratic president provided," the memo concludes. ***Washington Post 5/2***

Racist medicine exposed

Residents from one of South Africa's poorest townships have destroyed the myth that Africans cannot be trusted with Aids drugs — by staying alive.

Dozens of adults and orphans with the HIV virus have set a precedent by following a medical regime that some governments and drugs companies had said was not feasible in Africa.

Sceptics have long argued that poor Africans, many of whom lack watches and literacy, would break the strict regime of taking certain pills at certain times, risking the emergence of a drug-resistant strain of HIV.

"The response has been incredible. These adherence rates are better than you would get in the US or the UK," said an MSF spokeswoman. ***GW 6/4***

IN THE WAR ON TERROR, YOU'RE EITHER WITH US OR AGAINST US!
HALLIBURTON
OR BOTH!
IRAQI CONTRACTS UNDER SADDAM
IRAQI CONTRACTS AFTER SADDAM
WASSERMAN

No terror link to Iraq

. . . no conclusive evidence of joint terrorist operations by Iraq and Al Qaueda has been found, several intelligence officials acknowledged, nor have ties been discovered between Baghdad and the September 11, 2001, attacks on Washington and New York.

. . . an intelligence official said, "Things pointing in one direction were given a lot of weight and other things were discounted." ***NYT 6/9***

No tax $$ for poorest

. . . there are 50 million households — 36 percent of all households in the nation — who will receive no benefit from the tax law. The figure includes people who do not earn enough to owe income tax. ***NYT 6/1***

US used uranium in Iraq

Nine million tank rounds of depleted uranium (DU) litter the terrain of Iraq. When a DU shell is fired it ignites on impact. Uraninum plus traces of plutonium and americium, vaporize into tiny, ceramic particles of radioactive dust. Once inhaled, uranium oxides lodge in the body and emit radiation indefinitely . A single particle of DU lodged in a lymph node can devastate the entire immune system.

DU is classified by UN resolutions as a weapon of mass destruction. Yet a weapon of mass destruction was used in Iraq by those who were there on the pretext of seeking them out. ***GW 5/28***

Now they call it terror

In its annual report to Congress on terrorism the State Department said that the 199 recorded terrorist incidents last year represented a 44 percent drop from the previous year. . . . Virtually all the incidents identified by the U.S. government as acts of global terrorism" in 2002 occurred in four places: in Colombia, in Chechnya with its separatist war; In Afghanistan, with the continuing low-scale war; and with the Palestinian intifada. Elsewhere, the Bali tourist bombing by Islamic extremists caused some 200 deaths.

Before September 11, 2001, virtually none of this would have been called terrorism. It would have been called civil insurrection or nationalist or separatist violence.

Since September 11, vast global significance has been attributed to such episodes. They have made the rationale for state mobilization and the restrictions of civil liberties in the United States (and at the American penal colony at Guantanamo Bay). ***Tribune 5/7***

The Rosenbergs — Loyal to International Working Class, Not to Bosses

On June 19th 50 years ago the U.S. government executed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for "conspiracy to commit espionage." Their trial occurred in the midst of the anti-communist hysteria of McCarthyism and the Cold War.

Because the Rosenbergs were communists, the ruling class painted them as "agents of a foreign power," and communism as something alien to U.S. workers. The rulers claimed that the Soviets had to steal nuclear secrets because they were "too dumb" to achieve what "more advanced" U.S. scientists could achieve. But four years later, when the Soviets were the first to send a vehicle into space (the "Sputnik"), it was U.S. rulers who were struck dumb. Finally, to justify the death sentence, Judge Kaufman blamed the Rosenbergs for the Korean War and the deaths of thousands of U.S. soldiers, helping U.S. rulers to intensify their rampant anti-communism.

The Rosenbergs were accused of "conspiracy" because it is easier to prove than actually committing espionage. Ethel Rosenberg's brother, David Greenglass, a low-level operative in Los Alamos, lied in exchange for the government not prosecuting his wife. He said that Ethel had typed the "secrets" for Julius. His lies sent Ethel to the electric chair. She refused to testify against her husband in exchange for a life sentence. In a recent book, Greenglass admitted he lied to help convict his sister.

Millions around the world demonstrated on behalf of the Rosenbergs. The couple had two young sons, 6 and 10, and most people felt even if their parents were "guilty," they shouldn't be executed. Governments and even the Pope petitioned the Eisenhower administration for clemency. Many scientists pointed out that whatever secrets might have been given the Soviets would eventually have been figured out by them anyway. But the hysteria whipped up in the U.S. helped the ruling class win people here to back it in the Cold War.

It is very possible, even probable, that Julius Rosenberg did try to give information to the Soviets. He knew that U.S. rulers were threatened by the spread of communism because of the example set by the USSR, whose working class and Red Army had just smashed the Nazi war machine nearly single-handedly. U.S. rulers, along with Britain and France, had initially supported Hitler moving east to destroy the world's first communist-led country. It was no stretch to figure out that the ruling class here, with a monopoly on the A-bomb, would not hesitate to use it on the Soviet Union. So they painted the Rosenbergs as disloyal Red traitors.

Unfortunately the Communist Party U.S.A. fell right into this trap. For several decades before World War II, the CP was part of the most dedicated internationalist organization in world history. They had fought for workers and the exploited everywhere. They were "disloyal" and "treasonous" to the bosses' governments, racist police brutality, fascism, the bosses' frame-up legal system, lynching, mass poverty and to the imperialist governments who killed tens of millions worldwide. Why should any worker or decent person be "loyal" to that?

But by the late 1930s the communist movement began to waver in its commitment to fighting the capitalists and allied itself with the "lesser evil" bosses. They abandoned working-class internationalism and the fight for communism.

By the time of the Rosenberg trial, the CPUSA focused more on the legal defense — framing the question as "were they spies or not?" — rather than on exposing the nature of capitalism and the need to overthrow the ruling class.

But "patriotism" and "treason" are, like all politics, class questions. Every government, every nation, is set up and run by exploiters, against the interests of the exploited.

Working people have no nation. Nationalism and patriotism are used to get the working class to fight for the bosses' class interests.

Communists are internationalists. We and our class owe no loyalty to any boss, including "our own" exploiters. We in PLP, and every class conscious person who opposes exploitation and supports workers' struggles say, "Good for the Rosenbergs!" We proudly remember them and applaud their internationalist courage. "Loyalty to U.S. rulers" means loyalty to the exploiters and treason to the working class. Workers of the world, unite!✪

U.S. RULERS LOOT SOCIAL SECURITY

The U.S. ruling class is using the Social Security (SS) system to pay the military's $400 billion budget and cut taxes for the rich while raising them for the working class. In this $3.2 TRILLION scam, the rulers are stealing trillions from the SS surplus to mask the real budget deficit, and scaring people into thinking that unless SS funds are privately invested, their pensions will go down the drain.

The bosses' laws mandate that payments into the SS Trust Fund be used only to pay for current and future retirees' pensions. A surplus has developed by more being paid into SS by current workers than is paid out to current retirees.

But since 1968, the government has been "folding" the surplus into the overall Federal Budget, called the Unified Budget. The Johnson administration did this to mask the true cost of the Vietnam War. By including the surplus in the general federal budget, it "dramatically reduced the percentage of the budget devoted to 'defense' in 1968 and throughout the military build-up of the 1980s." (New York Times, 1/21/90)

In 1998, Senator Ernest Hollings (D-SC) estimated that by 2012 there should be "a $3.2 trillion reserve" when the baby boomer generation starts retiring. (NYT, 11/9/98) But there won't be any reserve. There will be a huge deficit because the government stole trillions from the surplus to help finance every war from Vietnam to Iraq.

The threat to SS could be eliminated if the biggest loophole of all was plugged. The law says workers must have 7.65% deducted from their paychecks in SS taxes. Employers must pay another 7.65% for each employee into the SS Trust Fund.

But this tax is paid only on the first $87,000 of wages annually. So a couple earning $50,000 a year pays $3,825 into the Fund, while a CEO making $10 million a year pays $6,655, a tax RATE of less than .0004 per cent! If the CEO had to pay 7.65% on his full $10 million salary, he would pay $765,000 a year and his corporate employer would have to pay another $765,000! With that loophole gone there would be no "deficit."

TAX CUTS AND BUDGET DEFICITS

The current Bush tax cut for the wealthy and the billions of debt building from the Iraq war are producing an astronomical deficit. But this process began in the 1980s under Reagan and Bush and continued under Clinton. They also used the SS system to mask their swindles.

The fleecing of the SS Trust Fund surplus is not only paying for imperialist wars but masking the true dimensions of the Federal deficit. If a $200 billion SS surplus were not diverted into the overall Federal budget revenue, the Federal deficit would be that much higher and force the government to borrow even more money to "balance" the budget. So the working class is paying more in taxes while the rich pay less; facing the threat of reduced pensions to pay for endless wars; and giving our sons and daughters to kill and be killed in oil wars for profit and world domination. U.S. rulers are the biggest looters of all.✪

401(K)ick in the Head

The retirement dream of millions of U.S. workers is rapidly becoming a nightmare. While the rulers' fleecing of Social Security endangers present and future retirees, the bursting of the 1990's stock bubble has wiped out retirement for millions and impelled one of every eight workers over 65 to work or look for work. Nearly one-fourth of those over 45 plan to postpone retirement.

Much of this is due to the scam over 401(k)s. The old-fashioned company pension was a "defined benefit plan" — that is, the company was committed to pay a certain pension at a certain age and had to deposit funds to guarantee that amount. However, the 401(k) is a "defined *contribution* plan," meaning that whatever contribution was put in, either solely by the employer or by both the employer and employee, there was no defined benefit. The company had no defined commitment; future benefits depended on whatever happened in the stock market where the 401(k)s were invested.

Fine, when the market's rising. But under capitalism, the boom always leads to a bust. This virtually destroyed those pension funds invested in 401(k)s. In the past two years, 77% of workers between 50 and 70 lost money in this thievery.

Originally the 401(k) was supposed to *supplement* the traditional pension. But corporations, seeing the chance to escape any committed benefit, shifted to the 401(k)s. If the market collapses, too bad for the workers. The company has no responsibility to pay out a specific benefit. From 1979 to 1998, corporations decreased the traditional plans by 60% while 401(k)s doubled.

Now "many seniors are returning to the workforce because they don't have the financial resources" on which to retire. "And the baby boomers approaching retirement don't look much better." (All quotes and information from N.Y. Daily News, 6/8)

With nearly 20 million workers unemployed or underemployed, capitalism now has ex-retired workers fighting younger jobless workers for a decreasing number of jobs.

The profit system leads straight to hell.✪

1980's Tax 'Cut' was Hike for Workers

In the 1980s, the net income of millionaires greatly increased when the top tax rate for individuals was reduced from 70% to 28%. "The corporate tax rate also dropped substantially…[while] the share of Federal revenues from Social Security taxes rose 23 percent…[In] the Reagan-Bush years…the burden of taxation was shifted from the income tax to the Social Security tax. Counting their employers' share, nearly three-quarters of all Americans now pay more in Social Security taxes than they do in income taxes…[Now] the expenses of the Government are financed more by a tax on the poor and the middle class and less by a tax on the wealthy." (NYT, 1/21/90)✪